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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : USIS Geneva Conference Operation--18
United States Information Agency, DESP. NO.

TO : ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ WASHINGTON.

REF : (Letter F.A. Long, IBS/TV, Nov 21, 1957
(Geneva TOUSI #48, Nov. 27, 1957-1B5
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December 13, 1957

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SUBJECT: OIR (Soviet Orbit Broadcasters) Proposal to EBU (European Broadcasting Union) members.

SUMMARY: Leo Wallenborn, EBU director, reports concerted effort at rapprochement, both technical and program, by the communist dominated OIR. It currently offering individual EBU members series of radio and TV programs entitled "Science in Service of Peace". EBU meeting in Lausanne Nov. 23-25 showed solid front in rejecting offer. However, possible some individual services may offer to examine the series although Wallenborn thinks unlikely. First replies from Europe definitely negative; some interest expressed in Far East, however, with a definite yes from Ceylon. Wallenborn to be replaced at EBU by Swiss Charles Gillieron.

1. Leo Wallenborn, director of the European Broadcasting Union, confirms that the offer of the communist dominated OIR (Organization of International Radio), with headquarters in Prague, has started a new series of bids for East-West cooperation. He considers the offer of the series "Science in the Service of Peace" a major bid in this direction. There have been other offers, both programming and technical. The communist itch for technical cooperation is confirmed by Gerald Gross, Assistant Secretary General of the ITU. Both Wallenborn and Gross consider that the current campaign is serious and well planned and may have some effect in shaking the resolve of EBU members to have nothing to do with the OIR. However, there have been no signs of such defection within the European group as yet.

2. The OIR was the original European broadcasters' agency of cooperation. However, it was captured by the communists soon after 1946 and moved bodily to Prague in 1948. The EBU was then set up by the free nations with Wallenborn as executive director.

3. Wallenborn estimates that the communists have skillfully planned the current appeal to go directly to the individual national broadcasters rather than the EBU, largely as a result of regular EBU rebuffs to previous OIR moves. The EBU actually has only a very

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loose LIAISON ROLE in the present attempt and there is only a general exchange of information, usually in response to solicitation, sometimes repeated, by the EBU secretariat. This was the procedure followed regarding the current OIR offer. Wallenborn believes that the science series is pitched toward forcing a wedge into the University of the Air, started by the French RDF in 1949. It is a very successful program in which most of the West European systems of radio and TV participate. It is a separate organization from the EBU although having links. As noted in Geneva's TOUSI 48, Herr Beckmann, the intendant of Radio Frankfurt, is a very active leader in the University's Executive Committee, and information may be obtained through him as to how the other members have responded. Wallenborn said he believes that the French had been non-committal but expressed a willingness to examine the OIR material before passing final judgment. Poland is a participant in the University of the Air Exchanges. A copy of the University's charter is enclosed.

4. Wallenborn showed Stuart three replies he has received to his circular letter of Nov. 15th. Finland, in a letter signed by Jussi Koskiluoma, its radio director, said flatly he has no intention of entertaining the OIR offer. Sweden, in a letter signed by N. O. Frangen, added the comment with its rejection that "Swedish radio has no intention to participate in any activity in which OIR takes the initiative." The Austrians also noted that their network does not contemplate any such exchanges.

5. By telephone on Dec. 12th--an interview being impossible due to Wallenborn's illness--his office informed Wiener that the Frankfurt radio people say they have not received an OIR offer as yet but that they are in accord with the negative stand taken by other EBU members. Radio Netherlands has also sent a negative reply, as has the South African radio.

6. Wallenborn's office further told Wiener that it has been informed by Radio Ceylon that it will actively participate in the OIR program and has already scheduled one series for next April and another for May. It has said that it will later send the texts of these series to Wallenborn.

7. The EBU office also said that Pakistan has expressed interest in obtaining details of the OIR programs, some of which it has already received. It has invited submission of scripts for use as background material.

8. Wallenborn is leaving his EBU post on March 1. He will be replaced by Charles Gillieron of Switzerland. As of Nov. 27th, Gillieron's titles are listed as: Secretary General of the EBU;

Director

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From USIS/Geneva Con Op

Director of the Administration of the EBU; President of the Société Romande de Radiodiffusion, Lausanne; vice-president of the Swiss Broadcasting Society; President of Courts of Aigle Vaud and Pays d'Enhaut, Vaud. Further information will be sent on him later.

9. This office will continue to keep in touch with Wallenborn and hopes to see him within two weeks for more details on answers so far received and any new responses coming in.

E. H. Wiener, Jr.
E. H. Wiener, Jr.
Acting Public Affairs Officer

Enc: Booklet on University of the Air

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